Reach Attendance Policy

Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Transfers

Reach abides by all federal, state, and local policies and guidelines for student admission and does not impose admission requirements that are inconsistent with these policies and guidelines. This includes compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act regarding homeless students, including but not limited to, enrolling homeless students in a timely manner even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment (e.g., proof of residency or previous academic records), and providing those students with services comparable to services offered to students not experiencing homelessness.

To comply with enrollment parameters, state regulations and reporting, and/or testing processes and requirements, Reach may at various times during the school year temporarily "pause" enrollment. This "pause" will hold students in the enrollment process on a wait list for a defined period. After the "pause" of enrollment is over, students will be able to move forward in the enrollment process. The school board has delegated to the school leader the authority to define and implement these temporary "pauses" of enrollment periods. The "pause" dates will be posted on the school's website.

Non-school initiated withdrawal to another PA public LEA from Reach will be completed when Reach has received confirmation of enrollment in the next LEA.

Attendance

Students in Reach have no physical classrooms but still must meet all regulatory requirements for attending public schools in Pennsylvania. These requirements include attending school for the required number of days and/or completing a required number of instructional hours. Caretakers and students are jointly responsible for ensuring students meet the attendance requirements. School authorities are responsible for enforcing attendance laws. Students not attending school as mandated by law will be considered truant.

Although there is more flexibility in the Reach program than in a traditional school setting regarding instructional time, students are still expected to follow the school calendar.

Additional Requirements by Pennsylvania: **A cyber charter school shall, at least once during any week consisting of at least three full or partial days of academic instruction, ensure that each enrolled student is able to be visibly seen and communicated with in real time by a teacher, administrator or other representative of the cyber charter school, either in person or via electronic means, in order to ensure the well-being of the student and verify participation in the educational program. The requirement under this subsection may be satisfied by students turning on a webcam during synchronous online instruction.**

Caretaker and Learning Coach Responsibilities for Attendance

All Grade Levels: State laws require that caretakers take responsibility for ensuring their student(s) attends school. In addition, all students must complete assigned lessons and submit specified assessments to their teachers. Attendance should be equated to work completion or being present for the day and seen by a staff and communicating in a meaningful way. If the student does not complete assigned lessons and is not seen for the day, then attendance hours will not be marked. Students and/or their caretakers and/or learning coaches must also participate in/respond to regular telephone, email message, and/or web conferencing (Zoom) contacts, as well as in-person contacts with a teacher during the school's regularly scheduled school hours.

Elementary and Middle School (Grades K–8): To meet attendance requirements and successfully complete their lessons, students in elementary and middle school will need assistance from a learning coach. The student's need for assistance will range from substantial assistance to relatively minor assistance and will vary depending on the student's age, ability to be self-directed, and to comprehend the materials. In addition, students must be in a safe and secure environment, which generally requires the student to have adult supervision during the entire school day to meet health and safety regulations.

High School (Grades 9–12): Students are expected to perform their schoolwork independently. However, the learning coach is still responsible for verifying that the student has completed the assigned lessons and assessments or is present for the day by being seen and having meaningful interaction with staff.   The learning coach is also expected to be available for regular teacher conferences. While students may not need adult supervision during the school day, they must still be in a safe and secure environment.

For all grade levels to be considered present, students must be meeting Pennsylvania guidelines of being present that day AND/OR completion of lessons for the day. Students seen any day Monday-Friday who have meaningful contact with a staff member will be considered present for that day.

Marking and Verifying Attendance

The Attendance Department is responsible for documenting student attendance in Focus and for verifying the accuracy of attendance records through authenticating student module completion. Caretakers and learning coaches do not record attendance at Reach in either Canvas or Focus.

Learning coaches can reach out to the Attendance Department with questions or concerns around attendance hours. Disputes related to attendance should be discussed first with the Attendance Department. Learning coaches who do not have their concerns resolved should

contact the school leader to resolve the dispute, then follow the dispute resolution procedures if the issue is not resolved with the school leader.

The School Day

Students must complete a certain number of instructional hours per day as required by state law and regulations. The school day is not limited to certain hours for start and end times, however the school's teaching staff is only available during the school's hours of operation. Learning coaches must also be available for their scheduled phone conferences during these times. To be present via eyes on, the student must be seen by a staff during the school day in an official staff to student capacity.

The School Calendar

The school operates according to a set school calendar, which includes days when teachers will not be available due to professional development (other Support Services may be available during these days), and days when the school is completely closed (no Support Services are available during these days). Student learning may continue during any days when the school is closed. Families will be notified of planned or unplanned occasional system maintenance, which may temporarily limit student access to Reach's learning management system and will not count against student attendance. All work must be completed as of the last day of school, except as provided in the Late Course Completion section of this handbook. School work that is not completed as of the last day will receive an incomplete or failing grade.

Types of Absences

Reasons for excused absences may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Health problems- Students are unable to participate in schoolwork due to physical or mental health problems.

If a student misses a school day, the caretaker or learning coach must submit an absence excuse through Focus documenting the health issue. The school may also require a doctor's note for absences of more than three (3) consecutive days.

Other excused absences- Examples of other excused absences include a family illness that requires the
absence of the student, a death in the immediate family, religious holidays, family trips that can be taken only during the normal school calendar year (see the section below on extended absences), court appearances requiring the student's attendance, attendance at special events of educational value approved by a teacher, and other special circumstances that show good cause. These absences must be approved in advance by the Attendance Team. If requested or required, families should expect to provide appropriate documentation to support an absence.

During an excused absence, the student is still responsible for completing all required lessons and assessments for the school term.

Unexcused absences- Absences that are not approved by the school will be considered unexcused.

Extended Absences

If a learning coach is aware their student is going to be unable to complete their learning activities for more than three (3) consecutive school days, they should contact the school as soon as possible to inform them of the planned absence and discuss a plan to ensure the student stays on track to complete the school year successfully. The school may request documentation of the reason(s) for the planned absence.

The Attendance Department is responsible for documenting student attendance in Focus and is responsible for verifying the accuracy of attendance records through authenticating student lesson completion.

Educational Trips can requested via a form in the Focus Parent Portal. Trips outside of Pennsyvania must be requested 10 school days prior to departure. Students must be in good academic standing for trips to be granted as well as in eyes on compliance.

Focus Attendance Codes

The following attendance codes will appear in Focus:

Code	Definition of Cod
P	Present
C	School Closed
E	Excused Absence
U	Unexcused Absence

Hours of Schooling/Attendance

Students must meet all regulatory requirements for attending public schools in the state. These regulatory requirements include attending school for 180 days and completing a required number of hours of instruction per year.

Hours of schooling per day and/or week are accumulated by completing lessons, assessments, portfolio items, labs, attending direct instruction sessions, attending educational field trips, participating in state mandated assessments, and by participating in other educational activities.

Failure to attend mandated Zoom sessions, state testing, or respond to email and phone call messages from teachers may be counted against documented attendance.

Although there is more flexibility in the Reach program than in a traditional school regarding when instruction occurs, students, learning coaches and caretakers should be aware that the school calendar reflects the days on which teachers are available to students.

Attendance Responsibilities by Role

Caretaker/Learning Coach Responsibilities

- Alert the School of Excused Absences – If a student is absent, the caretaker or learning coach must complete the Attendance Excuse form in Focus for their student(s). The school will determine if the absence can be classified as excused, per the guidelines listed in this handbook. The Attendance Department will then enter an "E" or "U" for that day's attendance.
- Complete Defined School Year – Regardless of the number of hours of schooling a student may complete prior to the last day of the school year (as defined in the school year calendar), students are required to meet the weekly required instructional hours up to and including the last day of the school year.
- Days Off – Students are able to work on school days off to get ahead or make up work, however teachers and staff are not available on these days. Students cannot move these days on their official record to schedule in-session days.
    o Note: regularly scheduled school holidays will automatically be recorded as off.
- Educational Trips – If a student is participating in an educational trip, the caretaker or learning coach must submit a request to the school by completing the Educational Leave form found in Focus. The completed Educational Leave form must be submitted to the Attendance Department at least two (2) weeks prior to the planned trip. The leave must be approved by the school administration. Learning coaches and/or caretakers should communicate with teachers about adjusted work completion goals.

School Responsibilities

- Monitor and Review Attendance Records – The Attendance Department will monitor and review attendance records on a weekly basis. The Attendance Department will also identify and record excused absences and unexcused absences.
- Maintaining the Integrity of the Attendance Data – The attendance system prohibits further editing of attendance data at certain points. Any requests for adjustments to the previously verified records must be submitted to the school in writing for review, approval and adjustment.

Official Attendance Record – The Focus attendance system is the record of student attendance. It is, however, one of many sources used to determine if a student is meeting the minimum program requirements. If it has been determined that a student has not completed enough work or that certain other program requirements have not been fulfilled, further sanctions up to and including withdrawal may occur. If a student regularly does not complete enough work, despite repeated assistance and intervention from the school, then the student may accumulate unexcused absences or be withdrawn.

Truancy

Students who fail to meet legal attendance requirements, which may include reported attendance, required contact with teachers, submission of assessments, and documentation of lesson completion shall be considered truant. The school may institute truancy proceedings or otherwise report the student to the appropriate authorities, including courts, as is consistent with state law.

In order to maximize student learning, regular attendance is imperative. The Reach program offers a great deal of flexibility surrounding how many hours students spend each day on schoolwork and on what days of the week they complete schoolwork. Due to this flexibility, Reach has zero tolerance for truancy. Caretakers are held legally responsible for ensuring that their students are fully participating in school, even if they have designated another individual as their student's learning coach. The information below is intended to help caretakers understand how to avoid having their student be considered truant, and to understand the consequences of truancy.

In order to avoid truancy, the caretaker must ensure that the following activities are taking place:

- The student completes assigned lessons and assessments weekly.
- The student is available for regularly scheduled telephone calls with teachers.

- The student attends any assigned mandatory Zoom sessions.
- The student is able to demonstrate that they are doing their own schoolwork.

- The student attends mandatory state testing.

- The caretaker or learning coach has communicated with the teacher/school in advance if they need to deviate from the regular school calendar.

The final decision about whether an absence is considered excused or unexcused will be made by the Attendance Department, State Attendance Manager, or School Leader. Please note that three (3) unexcused absences are not in compliance with the law.

Reach is required to record student attendance in the same way as traditional public schools. If a student is not adequately engaging in the online program or has accumulated more than three (3) unlawful absences, the school is required to notify the caretaker in writing and work with the caretaker and/or learning coach to create a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP). If the student continues not to engage in the program, Reach is required to take further actions, up to and including, legal proceedings.

Unexcused Absences	Plan of Action
First and Second (1-2) unexcused absence	Caretakers will receive a notification that the absence is unexcused from previous week.
Third (3rd) unexcused absence	Caretakers will receive a phone call and written notification of three (3) unexcused absences. Invites will be sent for a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP).
Fourth (4th) unexcused absence and fifth (5th) unexcused absence	Caretakers will receive a phone call and email, which will outline next steps with regard to a mandatory School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) with school staff. Three (3) attempts will be made to hold a meeting with the caretaker to discuss the SAIP; however, the meeting can be conducted without the caretaker if they are unable to attend. Students with an IEP or 504 will be contacted about a meeting to review attendance concerns
Habitually truant status (having six (6) or more unexcused absences during the current school year)	Caretakers will be notified by phone call and email of absences, will be assigned a truancy officer, and possibly invited to attend a truancy diversionary program live lesson. For students under fifteen (15) years of age, the school will make a referral to other community-based attendance improvement programs or Children and Youth in the student's local area. Truancy charges may also be filed at the local magistrate.

	For students fifteen (15) years of age and older, the school will make a referral to other community-based attendance improvement programs in the student's local area. Truancy charges may also be filed at the local magistrate. Children and Youth may also be contacted if the student does not attend the community program. Students residing in Philadelphia County will be referred to the Go Program through the District Attorney's Office.
Ten (10) unexcused absences	After ten (10) consecutive absences, the student could be withdrawn from Reach for non-attendance, and the Resident District will be notified of the withdrawal. Children and Youth will also be notified for students under the age of eighteen (18).

Reach Cyber Charter School will work closely with families in the event a student has unexcused absences from school. Our goal is to work collaboratively with families to prevent truancy and improve student attendance and achievement. The above process is outlined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and is consistent with compulsory attendance laws of the state of Pennsylvania.

Definition of "Missing a Day of School"

Missing a "day" of school is defined as "missing 1% of overall lesson completion in a week", or not being seen for the day. Missing 1% of overall lesson completion in a week or not being seen for the day may be considered a day of unexcused absence if the learning coach or caretaker does not provide acceptable documentation to the school for those missed hours to be considered excused.

Attendance Policy Overview

At Reach Cyber Charter School, attendance is essential for academic success and is required by Pennsylvania state law. While students have flexibility in how and when they complete schoolwork, they must meet state-mandated attendance and instructional hour requirements. This includes both **completing lessons** and **being seen by staff and having meaningful interactions with staff.**

What Counts as Attendance?

Students are considered present when they:

- Complete assigned lessons and assessments **AND/OR**
- Are **seen and communicate** meaningfully with a Reach staff member during the school day (e.g., via zoom or in-person). Students must follow their teacher expectations for "eyes on" compliance in class.

To meet state regulations, students must be "seen" at least once per week in real-time by a Reach staff in an official staff to student capacity.

Caretaker & Learning Coach Role

Caretakers and learning coaches are legally responsible for ensuring their student:

- Completes required schoolwork
- Responds to teacher outreach
- Attends mandatory sessions and testing
- Submits absence excuses in **Focus**, the school's attendance system

School Calendar & Flexibility

- Reach follows a set school calendar, including teacher workdays and holidays.
- Students can work on assignments outside traditional hours, but teachers are only available during school hours.

Absences & Truancy

Excused absences include illness, family emergencies, religious observances, approved educational trips, and more. All absences must be submitted through Focus. Educational Trip forms can be found on the Focus Parent Portal. Trips outside of Pennsylvania must be approved at least 10 school days in advance.
 Unexcused absences may result in:

- Parent notifications
- School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meetings
- Truancy referrals to local authorities if not addressed
- Students with **10 consecutive unexcused absences** may be withdrawn from Reach.

Tracking Attendance

- Attendance is tracked and verified by the **Attendance Department** in Focus.
- Caretakers do **not** record attendance in Canvas or Focus.

- "Missing a day" may include not being seen or not completing at least 1% of weekly lessons.

Reach Cyber Charter School is committed to working with families to ensure students meet attendance requirements and stay on track for success. For help with attendance, please contact our Attendance Department at Reach_Attendance@reachcyber.org.